

Bungle Bungles & the Osmond Range : April 15 - May 5, 2012

These notes were completely revised in September 2011.

Section 1: The Osmond Range: April 15-25

Although this area is within walking distance of the Bungles, it could hardly be more different. The rocks are more angular. Most of the creeks are spring fed and flow well into the dry season, long after those in the Bungles have stopped. The vegetation remains green and includes the southernmost monsoon forest in the Kimberley. There are even a few small cycad groves.

The 4WD tracks that would take us to the edge of the Osmond Range are rough at best, often still closed at this time of year. We plan to overcome this by flying in by helicopter from the Bungles. The Bungles airstrip is about 330 kilometres from Kununurra, the last 80 kilometres of which is a 4WD track. The drive takes most of the day but we should arrive with plenty of time to fly to the Osmonds.

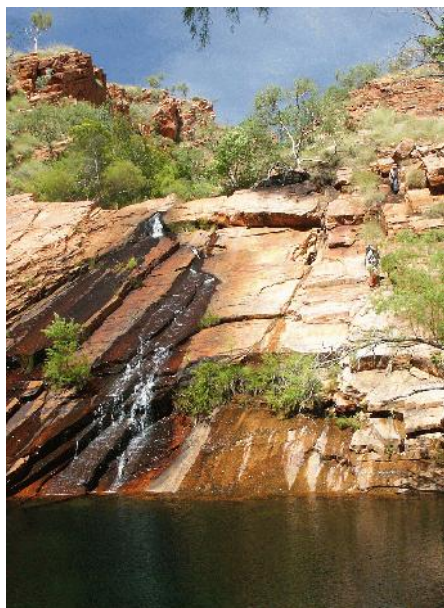
Exactly where we land can vary from trip to trip, normally close to but not right on one of the many creeks. We are soon enjoying the first of our many swims.



Walking along the top of the plateau is mostly flat and fairly easy – a good way to get from one creek to the next. The creeks, with their waterfalls and gorges, are where the most spectacular scenery is. In some places we will have to scramble up steep slopes; in others the walking should be flat and easy. Sometimes we will drop our packs and do a day



or half-day walk. At other times, we will carry the packs and shift camp from one creek to another.



The vegetation can change dramatically from year to year, so dramatically that the guide on our 2004 trip could scarcely recognise the areas that were described in our notes from 2001. It's been the same on each trip since. The one constant is the lovely gorges, pools and waterfalls which make the Osmonds a special place. At the end of the ten days, a helicopter picks us up and we fly back to the Bungles.

Terrain and difficulty

**Overall
Climate**

Level 3.

This is a relatively hot time of year. The temperature will reach the low to mid 30's most days. Temperatures of 35°C are not uncommon. The heat reflecting back from the sand and rocks in some areas can make it feel hotter still. The humidity is normally relatively low so the heat will not feel as uncomfortable as it does during the wet season. Nighttime minimum temperatures average 18-20°C but can go down to about 10C so you need to be prepared for cold nights. The pools, especially those which get some sun, are much more comfortable for swimming than they are later in the year. Although rain is unlikely, it is common enough so you should be prepared for a rainy day or two.

Look carefully and you can see the people walking down.

Terrain Level 2-4. Although some of the terrain is quite open and easy, much of the walking will be done in narrow gorges. There will be some clambering over large rocks and some edging along narrow ledges. There will also be one long and strenuous climb. As we have not done all of this section before, you must be prepared for at least as strenuous a walk as on the first two sections.

Vegetation Level 2-3. The vegetation can vary dramatically from year to year. We may encounter thick scrub and spinifex or there may be little thick vegetation to push through.

Hours You normally walk 4-6 hours per day.

Packs **Waterproofing.** We recommend you bring a garbage bag for waterproofing on the off chance that you might get some rain.

Pack weight: level 3 = one week's food, but you do not normally carry a full pack every day.

Art None found to date.

Campsites Flat areas in the Osmonds tend to be small so some of our campsites are likely to be more crowded or more spread out than normal depending on how large and/or how far apart the tent sites are.

Swims Magnificent pools and flowing creeks.

Lowlights Steep climbs and thick spinifex (some years). Flies and cattle in the lowlands at the end.

Highlights Beautiful pools, gorges and waterfalls; expansive views out over the plains.

Fishing Possible, especially near the beginning and end. We had a couple of fresh fish meals on our first trip to the area.



View down one of the gorges to the distant ranges to the north.



Notes for Section 1

the few photos we can include here come no where near doing justice to the area, but they should give you a taste of what the trip is like.

The difference in 2005 was even more dramatic than the one referred to in the notes above. With only one major rainfall during the wet season, the lovely pools and waterfalls which make the top of the Osmonds such a special place had dried up and almost disappeared. This was in stark contrast to our first trip which was in August, normally a much drier time. In 2008, it was back to normal. The 2011 wet season broke records so we can't be sure what we will find this time.

Unlike the Bungles, this walk is in an area where campfires are permitted.

Those leaving at the end of this section will probably be flown back to Kununurra from the Bungles. There is a small chance we will use a vehicle. We cannot be sure which transport we will use until we see how many are joining or leaving.

Those continuing to section two will be able to leave their food for this section in the vehicle during the first walk. It may be possible to have a few fresh things brought in with those joining for section two.

Maps. Kimberley Tourist map and the Turkey Creek 1:100 000 or the Bungle Bungle and Texas Downs 1:50 000 topographic maps.

Section 2: Purnululu (Bungle Bungle) National Park: April 25-May 5

In mid 2003, Purnululu joined the list of Australia's World Heritage locations. Here's what the Department of Environment and Heritage has to say. "Famous for the 45 000 hectare Bungle Bungle Range, with its huge expanse of striking banded beehive structures, sandstone cliffs and towers, Purnululu has been listed as an outstanding landscape that is a superlative natural phenomenon, revealing the history of its formation over hundreds of millions of years. Purnululu National Park has such outstanding universal natural values that it enriches the world and should be conserved for the benefit of all people. Before 1982, when aerial pictures were first released, it was virtually unknown except to pastoralists, scientists and the local Aboriginal community. It is now seen as one of the scenic jewels of outback Australia."

There are many tours which will take you to Purnululu. No other tour will allow you to experience as much of the park in as intimate a fashion as ours.

The start of our Bungles walks is at the end of a 4WD track about 10 kilometres from the Bungles airstrip.

The start of this walk is especially slow and easy as we stop and explore some of the small southern gorges along the way. Eventually we reach a base camp about 12–13 kilometres up Piccaninny Gorge, where sheer red cliffs are silhouetted against the clear blue skies of the dry season. Piccaninny is by



far the largest gorge in the Bungles. We spend three or four nights there using the days to explore the many fascinating side gorges.



Easy day walk.

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These gorges offer a variety of delights — some are palm filled, some are very narrow and require swimming, some have caves which require the use of a torch. There is at least one gorge that allows us to reach a high point. No words can do justice to the beauty of the area. The only way to appreciate it is to come and see it for yourself.

We cannot climb to the actual top as climbing up the domes themselves is not permitted because of their exceptionally fragile nature. We can, however, follow watercourses as far as they will take us ... and that gets us some amazing views.



Looking down Piccaninny Gorge from near the top.

We begin our return two or three days before the end, spending the final night only a few kilometres from the car. On the final day, we return to the vehicle and drive back to Kununurra.

Terrain and difficulty

Overall Level 3

Climate As for section one.

Terrain **With packs - level 2:** flat, minimal rock hopping, some ledging, some soft sand. The walk up the Piccaninny Gorge, mainly over pebbles and sand can be quite tiring for many people. Going beyond our first base camp, done with full packs on some trips, requires some clambering over large rocks and includes edging along at least one narrow ledge.

Daywalks without packs - level 4. Most of the day walks involve clambering over large rocks. Some include steep climbs. Some people find this very difficult, even without full packs.

Although this difficulty is often more psychological than physical, it can be very real. The only reason this section is not rated "difficult" is that the hardest parts are done without full packs.

The climb up one of the gorges is particularly strenuous. Few groups have had every member go all the way. If you don't wish to do the rock scrambling, you need to be prepared to relax and enjoy their surroundings while the others continue. Keen birdwatchers often find this especially pleasant. Some people become uncomfortable in the absence of the rest of the group. Please keep this in mind when choosing this trip.

Vegetation	With packs - level 1: minimal vegetation Without packs - level 2-4: some walks include dense sections of sharp and/or sticky spinifex, gaiters essential, long trousers recommended.
Hours	You normally walk 4-6 hours per day.
Packs	As for section one.
Art:	Two minor sites
Campsites	Mostly on sand, might include rock ledges on some nights. Rain rare but could cause change of site.
Swims	Normally fairly good. Depends very much on the just finished wet season. The water is warmer and there is more of it than on trips later in the year.
Lowlights	Helicopters intrusive most of day, aircraft early and late. Not as bad as later in the year.
Highlights	Incredible and spectacular gorge scenery, each one uniquely different from the others.
Fishing	No.



Notes for Section 2

Those joining at the start of this section may be flown or driven from Kununurra to the Bungles may be flown into Turkey Creek or the Bungles. We cannot be sure which transport we will use until we see how many are joining or leaving at this point.

Those who wish to do a helicopter flight over the Bungles will have an opportunity to do so either on arrival or just before departure from the park. Which time we choose depends on when we arrive. The 2011 prices began at \$215. For further information please see their website:
www.slingair.com.au/bungleBungleHelicopterFlights.shtml.

All this area is a stove only area. Campfires are not permitted.

You will need to bring a small bag for toilet paper as neither burning nor burying are permitted.

Maps. Kimberley Tourist map and the Turkey Creek 1:100 000 or Bungle Bungle 1:50 000 topographic map.

Notes for Both Sections.

Bringing fresh fruit, vegetables or honey into WA is illegal whether you come by road or plane. (You cannot even bring in boxes or other containers that once contained fruit or vegetables.) Bags are checked both on the highway and at the airport. There will be time to do some shopping in Kununurra.

A day pack is useful on both sections of this trip. However, if you don't have a daypack, you can empty your main pack and carry that.

Those doing both sections of the trip have to carry only what they need on each section. Additional food and clothing can be left in the vehicle during the walks.

Both sections of this trip have been rated level three because of the day walks. If you had to carry a full pack every day, section two and possibly section one would rate as level four.

You should always keep a water bottle, your lunch and some money with you during the drives as you cannot easily get into your pack during the journey. You should have enough money to pay for your drinks at the stops.

The flights depend on bookings. If one section does not run, we may drive in both directions.

If the track into the Bungles is closed as it was in 2011, we will have to fly in. That would increase the cost by at least \$250 per person. We cannot be sure of the exact additional cost until we know how many people there are and can get quotes. (To date, this has only happened once.)

It **might** be possible to fly out late on the day your trip finishes. Please do not book a connecting flight on the same day unless you have confirmed it with us beforehand.

Itinerary: Bungle Bungles & Osmond Range

Note 1 Day 0 is the day before departure.

Note 2 This itinerary is subject to change.

Section 1 Osmond Range

Day 0 Section one begins in Kununurra. There are daily air and bus services between Kununurra and Perth and Darwin. Connections to the eastern states are normally made through Darwin. Pre-trip meeting 6.30 p.m., outdoor area, Kimberley Croc Backpackers. **This meeting is important.** If you cannot make the meeting, please advise us well in advance. Note.

Day 1 Pick up between 7.00 and 7.30 a.m. Pick up is from your accommodation in Kununurra provided you have given us the address at least a week before departure or have made other arrangements at the pre-trip meeting. If you are unable to notify us where you are staying, the pick up is from in front of the Kununurra Visitors Centre.
Drive to the Osmonds. Stop en route to buy cool drinks, etc.
Begin walk, carrying full packs. Bush camp.

Day 2–10 Bush camping. Carrying full packs on 1 or 2 days, day packs at other times, exploring gorges.

Day 11 Fly back to the Bungles. Fly or drive back to Kununurra for those finishing here.
End of section 1.

Section 2 Bungle Bungles

Day 11 Those joining this are collected from their accommodation in Kununurra and taken out to meet us. You **must** contact us to confirm pickup details well before departure.
Drive to Piccaninny from pick up point and begin walk.

Day 12-20 Bushwalking. Carrying full packs some days, day packs at other times.

Day 21 Return to vehicle. Drive back to Kununurra, arriving mid afternoon.

Important Note **Air North**, the main airline operating into Kununurra uses relatively small aircraft and has a baggage allowance of only 13 kg on some flights. Unless special arrangements have been made, if you are flying to Kununurra and your baggage weighs more than 13 kg, it may not get on the plane with you. (This would be very unusual but it is possible.) Contact Air North for more details. Phone: 1800 627474 or (08) 8920 4000; Fax: (08) 8920 4095; email: airnorth@regionallink.com.au
Skywest began flying between Kununurra and Broome or Darwin in April 2009. Call 1300 660088 for flight dates and times or see www.skywest.com.au
Virgin Blue offers daily flights from Brisbane and Melbourne to Darwin and a limited number of direct flights from Adelaide to Broome. If you can't get a good fare with Qantas, flying Virgin Blue to Darwin or Broome, then Air North or a bus to Kununurra might save you some money. See www.virginblue.com.au.